

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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Note to Media: If you would like to schedule a ride-along with a DRE, please contact Trooper Ken Denton

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Washington 12th Drug Recognition Expert Class Begins Next Week

The Washington State Patrol Drug Evaluation and Classification Program will be starting the 12th Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) class, starting May 17th at the Washington State Patrol Academy. This class is slated to have 22 students and will get the state closer to its goal of 200 DRE's in the field.

DRE's are made up of approximately 60% state troopers with the other 40% being in local police departments. These cooperating agencies have put together a program that enables an officer who suspects drugs in a person's system to have someone available to do an evaluation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Washington's DRE program is recognized across the country as one of the leaders in DRE programs. At a recent National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) seminar in Washington D.C, the International Association of Chiefs of Police noted the DRE program in Washington State stating: "it is one of the best run programs in the country". The training consists of 2 weeks of classroom with supervised field evaluations to follow.

Unlike the conventional tools in a DUI arrest, DRE's uses a stethoscope, blood pressure kit, small pen light, and a suspects pulse to detect certain types of drugs in a persons system. Once these drugs are suspected, a blood draw is done with a 90% confirmation rate from the State Toxicology Laboratory.

This program is making a difference in the safety of our citizens. There were approximately 1,500 confirmed DRE cases in 2003 with those numbers still coming in weekly. These cases involved everything from cocaine, to marihuana, to prescription and over the counter medicines. What many people don't realize is that you don't have to be under the influence of Alcohol or an illegal drug to be arrested for DUI. If your ability is impaired in any way from the use of any drug you can and will be prosecuted when caught. The same penalties will apply as a typical alcohol induced DUI arrest.